

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 815

INFO AMEMBASSY MEXICO

UNCLAS MERIDA 0241

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC, MX

SUBJ: CASE REVIEW OF AMERICAN PRISONERS IN MEXICO

REF: STATE 281646

1. RELATIVELY SMALL NUMBERS OF PRISONERS THIS DISTRICT MAKES ANALYSIS DIFFICULT. SINCE ATTORNEY GENERALS PROMISE TO ASSURE NOTIFICATION OF ARRESTS, THREE AMERICANS HAVE BEEN ARRESTED ON FEDERAL NARCOTICS CHARGES. MINISTERIO PUBLICO FAILED TO NOTIFY CONSULATE IN ALL THREE CASES. IN FACT, OUR INQUIRY TO HIM IN ONE CASE WAS HIS FIRST NOTICE OF ARREST ALTHO PRISONER HAD BEEN DETAINED IN AN OUTLYING AREA MORE THAN A WEEK. THIS WAS ISLAND OF COZUMEL.

2. NEVER ANY PROBLEM OF ACCESS IN THIS DISTRICT ONCE PRISONER IS LOCATED AND NO SUBSTANTIATED CASES OF BRUTALITY, MISTREATMENT OR EXTORTION BY OTHER PRISONERS. BRIBES TO OFFICIALS ANOTHER MATTER, HOWEVER.

3. FREQUENCY OF VISITS TO PRISONERS HAS DEFINITELY IMPROVED AND, AS A RESULT, SO HAVE THE SERVICES PROVIDED PRISONERS. HOWEVER MEDICAL FACILITIES AVAILABLE TO PRISONERS IS VERY POOR - BUT NOT MUCH WORSE THAN THAT AVAILABLE TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC IN THIS DISTRICT.

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4. THE CURRENT PRINCIPAL OFFICER HAS HIS OWN AIRCRAFT

ENABLING HIM TO VISIT PRISONERS IN REMOTE PLACES SUCH AS CHETUMAL AND ISLA MUJERES AND RETURN THE SAME DAY. HOWEVER, THE NEXT PRINCIPAL OFFICER WILL HAVE TO SPEND MUCH MORE TIME OUT OF THE OFFICE TO ACCOMPLISH THE SAME NUMBER OF VISITS. TRAVEL FUNDS ALSO WILL HAVE TO BE INCREASED SUBSTANTIALLY.

5. PRISONERS MOST DIFFICULT TIME USUALLY IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING ARREST, WHEN THEY ARE HELD IN LOCAL JAIL CELL KNOWN AS QTE PREVENTIVA UNQTE. SANITARY CONDITIONS MANY OF THESE ARE UNBEARABLE AND PRISONERS USUALLY HAVE TO SLEEP ON FLOOR. FORTUNATELY, PRISONERS USUALLY HELD THERE ONLY FOR A FEW DAYS. NEVERTHELESS, BELIEVE USG SHOULD PROTEST DETENTION IN JAILS OF THIS NATURE IN EFFORT TO GET GOM TO ELIMINATE THESE REMAINING PEST HOLES.

6. AMERICAN COMMUNITY THIS DISTRICT QUITE SMALL, BUT MOST VOCAL IN EXPRESSING THEIR DISLIKE OF QTE HIPPY DRUG SMUGGLERS UNQTE. THEIR REACTION MOST NEGATIVE TO CONGRESSIONAL INQUIRY AND TO NEWSPAPER ARTICLES IN US WHICH FAVOR PRISONERS IN ANY WAY. HOWEVER, THEIR VIEWS APPLY ONLY TO US CITS IMPRISONED ON DRUG TRAFFICKING CHARGES. THEY ARE MOST SYMPATHETIC WITH THOSE ENCARCERATED ON OTHER CHARGES - EVEN IF VIOLENCE INVOLVED. ASHFORD

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